



Envision Arlington Diversity Task Group

Date: June 25, 2024

Time: 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Remote Participation, via Zoom

Present - Rebecca Gruber (facilitator, minutes), Jane Flores, Michele Oshima, Carlos Morales, Sarah McKinnon, Laura Kiesel, Rev. Erica Richmond, Laurie Key

Agenda

1. Land Acknowledgement, Review of Mission Statement and Group Meeting Protocols
2. Check-in and introduction of new attendees
3. Call for additional agenda items
4. Report from Rev. Erica Richmond, DTG appointee to the Civilian Police Advisory Commission
5. Laura Kiesel, guest, to present and discuss concerns about the lack of renter representation in Town government
6. Approval of March meeting minutes
7. Discussion about future meetings
8. Promote and report back on past and upcoming Arlington-based programs
9. New business
10. Agenda for next time / Confirm Facilitator and Scribe

Minutes

1. **Land Acknowledgement, Review of Mission Statement and Group Meeting Protocols** Land Acknowledgement was read, skipped review of Mission Statement and Group Meeting Protocols due to familiarity of participants.
2. **Check-in and introduction of new attendees** was done.
3. **Report from Rev. Erica Richmond, DTG appointee to the Civilian Police Advisory Commission (CPAC)** Here are Rev. Erica's speaker notes, followed by the questions asked and answers given. To contact Rev. Erica: erica.richmond@firstparish.info

-----Beginning of Rev. Erica's Speaker Notes-----

Report to Diversity Task Group
Prepared by Rev. Erica Richmond

June 25, 2024

Commissioners:

Zach Dumay, Jen Hernandez, Sanjay Newton, Kathy Rogers, Melissa Jacobo, Erica Richmond, Susan Ryan-Vollmar, and Kari Sasportas.

Officers:

Susan Ryan-Vollmar, Chair
Melissa Jacobo, Vice Chair
Erica Richmond, Clerk

We had an initial business meeting in February and regular Commission meetings since March.

Meetings are hybrid, **fourth Wednesdays of the month**. Officers meet on the 3rd Monday of each month to prepare for the monthly commission mtg.

Our hope is that our monthly meetings and working groups will help us reach our short term and long-term goals:

- To create effective processes for complaints and commendations to fulfill our duties and responsibilities.
- To build strong relationships with each other; with members of the Arlington Police Department; and with the community groups that voiced a need for this Commission.
- To build community awareness of what CPAC does; how it operates; and how it can assist community members.
- To ensure that we remove language and other barriers to engagement with the ACPAC and the assistance it can provide individuals.

Commissioners agreed to organize the following Working Groups:

- Infrastructure and Information- Susan, Melissa, Erica
- Commissioner Training and Development: Melissa, Kari, and Susan
- Data Collection and Reporting- Sanjay and Zach
- Community Reporting- Kathy and Erica

Notes and Feedback from DTG members or attendees:

- Concern about police presence at meetings
- Challenges about building bridges between commissioners and APD
- Question about commissioner training and lens
 - What is APD doing to have more community liaisons? Social workers? Community outreach?
- Demographics of affordable housing and African-Americans
- Donovan Johnson racial profiling case, part of the settlement was specific training recommendations, lawyers for civil rights.org

-----End of Rev. Erica's Speaker Notes-----

Questions asked by DTG:

- What role does the Arlington Police Department (APD) have in the Commission? Going forward, Chief Flaherty will be joining the Commission's monthly meetings.
- How are you receiving complaints from the public? Previously complaints came through the Arlington Human Rights Commission and the Rainbow Commission. It is hoped that in the future complaints will come directly to the CPAC. Also, any community member can come to any CPAC commissioner. The Commissioner will then bring it for discussion at the CPAC monthly meeting. Note, currently CPAC does not have a contact email.
- Follow-up question--With the police presence at CPAC monthly meetings, how will complainants feel comfortable bringing their concerns to the Commission? To be decided.
- CPAC training was mentioned in the presentation; will that training include the Police Civilian Academy program? As far as Rev. Erica knows, the CPAC will not be doing the Police Civilian Academy program.
- How do the demographics of CPAC compare to the demographics of the APD, for example, the Commission seems to be predominantly female-identifying compared to the APD? Curious about the challenges of this? That's an interesting consideration.
- What is the APD's plan for increasing community liaison / social work role ala the City of Cambridge? That needs to be discussed.
- What is being done to "advertise" the existence / role of the Commission, especially to certain demographics in Town? Teresa Marzilli is the Town liaison to CPAC, and she will have ideas. Rev. Erica has shared with her congregation and other community faith groups the existence of the Commission and her role.
- Concerns that community members that live in affordable housing or identify as African-American are not well-represented.
- Will the recent case of Donovan Johnson's racial profiling be used as a reference for the Commission's work? Rev. Erica will bring this up with CPAC.

4. Laura Kiesel, guest, to present and discuss concerns about the lack of renter representation in Town government

- a. Renters are underrepresented in Town Meeting and Town boards and commissions relative to their percentage of Arlington's population.
- b. Diversity and equity issue that so many of the Town's decision makers are homeowners, which is also a reflection of higher income levels, creating an echo chamber during discussion and debate.
- c. Increased renter representation a recommendation of the Town's Fair Housing Action Plan, as well as the Community Equity Audit.
- d. Issues of fair housing violations towards Section 8 voucher holders. See the Suffolk University Study on discrimination towards Black renters and Section 8

voucher holders:

<https://www.suffolk.edu/news-features/news/2020/06/27/01/03/qualified-renters-need-not-apply#:~:text=A%20new%20study%20by%20a%20research%20team%20from,8%20housing%20vouchers%2C%20illegally%20shutting%20out%20qualified%20renters.>

- e. Question about the Arlington Human Rights Commission (AHRC) resurrecting / creating a housing working group.
- f. Question about the Town (Department of Planning and Community Development and/or the Department of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) creating a fair housing working group which might among other activities organize informational seminars on fair housing policies.

5. Approval of March meeting minutes Unanimous approval by meeting participants by the people present at the March meeting.

6. Discussion about future meetings Decision to go on hiatus. There will be no summer meetings. Future meetings will be scheduled at the specific request of DTG members.

DTG members are encouraged to attend Civic Engagement Group meetings, which are held the fourth Thursday of the month at 7:30PM; check the Town Calendar for Zoom registration information.

DTG members might also be interested in joining one of the Arlington Human Rights Commission's working groups. Contact the Commission to let you know of your interest: ahrc@town.arlington.ma.us Per Laurie, an AHRC commissioner, the current working groups are: Events & Outreach, Schools & Education, Religious Acceptance, and Communications. You can also express interest in joining a possible future Fair Housing working group.